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PTO/SB/05 (12/97)

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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 500.35669CX1 Total Pages 32

First Named Inventor or Application Identifier

Yoshinori NAKAYAMA

Express Mail Label No.

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box Patent Application
Washington, DC 20231

1. Fee: 760.00

6. Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

Please enter the Preliminary Amendment including the cancellation of original claims 1-14 and substitution of new claims 15-20 before calculation of the filing fee.

7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission
(if applicable, all necessary)

Please charge any shortages in the fees or credit any over-payments thereof to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135.

a. Computer Readable Copy
b. Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
c. Statement verifying identity of above copies

2. Specification

Total Pages 17

3. Drawing(s) (35 USC 113)

[Total Sheets 8]

4. Oath or Declaration

Total Pages 2

a. Newly executed (original or copy)
b. Copy from a prior application (37 CFR 1.63(d))
(for continuation/divisional with Box 17 completed)
[Note Box 5 below]

i. DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)

Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

5. Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
9. 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement Power of Attorney
10. English Translation Document (if applicable)
11. Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 Copies of IDS Citations
12. Preliminary Amendment
13. Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)
(Should be specifically itemized)
14. Small Entity Statement filed in prior application
Statement(s) Status still proper and desired
15. Certified Copy of Priority Document(s)
(If foreign priority is claimed)
16. Other:

17. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:

Continuation Divisional Continuation-In-Part (CIP) of prior application No: 08 1931,655

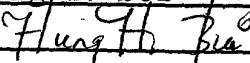
18. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

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11. SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT, ATTORNEY, OR AGENT REQUIRED

NAME	Hung H. BUI	
SIGNATURE		
DATE	August 23, 1999	REG. NO. 40,415

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08/23/99

08/23/99

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: Yoshinori NAKAYAMA

Application No.: To Be Assigned

Filing Date: August 23, 1999

Title: SCHEDULE RETRIEVAL METHOD FOR CONTROLLING
SCHEDULES AND SCHEDULE SERVER APPARATUS WITH
MULTISTAGEOUS IDLE-TIME RETRIEVAL MEANS

Art Unit: 2764

Examiner: N. Nguyen

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

August 23, 1999

Sir:

Supplemental to the Rule 53(b) Continuation Application filed on even date, entry of
the following claims 15-20 and remarks prior to examination is respectfully requested.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Page 1, following the title please insert: This application is a Continuation of
Application Number 08/931,655 filed September 16, 1997, which is incorporated herein by
reference.

line 11, insert –the number– after “reduce” and
change “extremely” to –much–;

line 21, insert –the number– after “reduce”;

line 22, change “extremely” to –much–;

Page 6, line 9, change “for” to –by–;

line 10, change “for” to –by–;

line 20, insert –101 and 102– after “apparatuses”;

Page 7, line 25, delete “a” at both occurrences;

line 27, delete “the” at the first occurrence, and
change “in the specific example of” to –as shown in–;

Page 8, line 11, insert –as shown in FIG. 4– after “401”;

line 17, delete “the”;

line 18, delete “the”;

line 26, delete “a” at the first occurrence;

Page 9, line 1, delete “the”;

line 2, delete “the”;

line 3, delete “a”;

line 10, delete “the”; and

Page 13, line 6, change “extremely” to –significantly–.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-14 without prejudice or disclaimer, and add claims 15-20, as follows:

1 15. A scheduling management system, comprising:

2 a schedule server which stores schedules of participants and schedules of equipments
3 reserved by ones of said participants in different groups; and

4 a plurality of remote client devices operatively connected to said schedule server,
5 which allow client users to input schedules of said participants and request an idle time
6 retrieval from said schedule server.

1 16. The schedule management system according to Claim 15, wherein said
2 schedule server comprises a communication controller which provides a visual display of said
3 idle time retrieval at selected ones of said client devices.

1 17. The schedule management system according to Claim 15, wherein said
2 schedule server comprises a communication controller which provides registration for a special
3 group, and wherein said idle time is retrieved so that at least one of participants and
4 equipments in said special group satisfies a retrieval condition for retrieving said idle time.

1 18. The schedule management system according to Claim 15, wherein said
2 schedule server comprises a data access unit which accesses selected databases in accordance

3 with instructions for retrieving the idle time common from said plurality of groups.

1 19. The schedule management system according to Claim 15, wherein a degree of
2 significance is provided to said participants respectively so that schedules of said participants
3 are grouped in the order of said degree of significance to thereby produce the idle time
4 corresponding to said degree of significance.

20. The schedule management system according to Claim 15, wherein said
schedule server comprises databases which store schedules of participants and schedules of
equipments reserved by ones of said participants, and a multistageous idle time retrieval unit
which divides schedules registered for participants and equipments into a plurality of groups
and retrieves an idle time common from one group as a retrieval condition for retrieving an
idle time common for another group of said plurality of groups.--

REMARKS

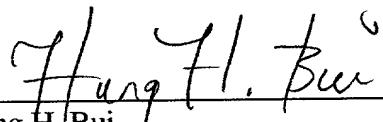
Claims 15-20 are pending in this application. Claims 1-14 have been canceled without
prejudice or disclaimer while claims 15-20 have been newly added in accordance with current
Office policy, to further and alternatively define Applicants' disclosed invention and to assist
the Examiner to expedite compact prosecution of the instant application. No fee is incurred by
the addition of these claims.

In view of the foregoing additions and remarks, all claims are deemed in condition for examination. Should any questions remain unresolved, the Examiner is requested to telephone Applicants' attorney at (703) 312-6600.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all claims are deemed to be in condition for examination. Should any questions remain unresolved, the Examiner is requested to telephone Applicants' attorney at (703) 312-6600.

To the extent necessary, the applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (500.35669X00).

Respectfully submitted,



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- 1 -

SCHEDULE RETRIEVAL METHOD FOR CONTROLLING SCHEDULES AND
SCHEDULE SERVER APPARATUS WITH MULTISTAGEOUS IDLE-TIME
RETRIEVAL MEANS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a schedule management system for transmitting and receiving individual and equipmental schedule data between individuals and 5 equipments.

For example, even in the case where a host person of a meeting in an office beforehand informs subjects of participation in the meeting of the date when the meeting will be held, the host person must sufficiently grasp the schedules of the subjects of participation to reduce absentees as extremely as possible. 10

A technique described in JP-A-5-181867 is a known example most relevant to the present invention.

In the conventional technique, a place retrieval function for retrieving the place for the meeting to be suitable to the scheduled date of the meeting and a term retrieval function for calculating the date on which the largest number of persons will participate in the meeting are used in the schedule management system to 15 thereby make it possible to aid the generation of notice of the meeting on the schedule to reduce absentees as 20 extremely as possible.

There is however a first problem in the con-

MULTISTAGEOUS

ventional technique that the place retrieval function and the term retrieval function need be used repetitively, so that the host person must re-input or correct the date of the meeting because these functions must be executed 5 repetitively unless an expected result is obtained.

There is a second problem that the date on which absentees will be reduced most extremely is not always an optimum retrieval result because the participants are different in significance in accordance with 10 the schedule of the meeting to be held. Practically, the participants are different in significance judged by the host person as to whether they are essential participants or optional participants. Accordingly, such a date on which the largest number of participants can attend the 15 meeting but some essential participants can not attend the meeting may be retrieved.

There is a third problem that there is no means for retrieving the schedule of the meeting for a person representing an arbitrary group because the schedules for the participants are inputted individually when 20 the term retrieval function is used. In the case of such a schedule, the date most suitable to the condition in which at least one representative participant is selected from a group necessary for participation in the meeting 25 is required.

As described above, it is important that the schedule management system is used to make a schedule just as the host person of the meeting designs.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A computer system according to the present invention is configured such that terminal systems allocated to a host person and subjects of participation are connected to each other so that data can be transmitted and received between these terminal systems, and the computer system is provided with a schedule management function for storing schedules of the host person and the subjects of participation, and a function for storing equipmental schedules reserved by the host person separately from the schedules of the host person and the subjects of participation.

According to the present invention, the problems in the schedule management system is solved by the provision of the following functions.

To solve the aforementioned first problem, as in the multistageous idle-time retrieval system, schedules registered for participants and equipments are divided into a plurality of groups so that an idle-time retrieval result for one group is re-set in a retrieval condition for retrieving idle time for another group. By this function, the retrieval can be narrowed to the retrieval result to be intended by the host person.

To solve the aforementioned second problem, there is provided a function for setting significance for the participants and equipments. Schedules of participants and equipments are classified into groups by sig-

nificance so that idle-time retrieval is executed multistageously. As a result, idle time can be retrieved so that the significance of the participants and equipments is satisfied.

5 To solve the aforementioned third problem, there is provided a function for registering equipments and participants in a plurality of special groups. At least one participant or at least one equipment in each special group must satisfy an idle-time retrieval condition. By the registration of the special groups, the date of the meeting by arbitrary persons representing the special groups using an arbitrary equipment can be retrieved.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

15 Fig. 1 is a functional configuration view of a computer system as an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a flow chart of an operating procedure in the embodiment of the present invention;

20 Fig. 3 is a processing view for explaining the operating procedure in the embodiment of the present invention by way of specific example;

Fig. 4 is a processing view for explaining the operating procedure in the embodiment of the present invention by way of specific example;

25 Fig. 5 is a processing view for explaining the embodiment of the present invention by way of specific

example particularly in the case where degrees of significance are given to participants;

Fig. 6 is a processing view for explaining the embodiment of the present invention by way of specific example particularly in the case where degrees of significance are given to participants;

Fig. 7 is a processing view for explaining the embodiment of the present invention by way of specific example particularly in the case where special group definition is provided; and

Fig. 8 is a processing view for explaining the embodiment of the present invention by way of specific example particularly in the case where special group definition is provided.

15 DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

An embodiment of the computer system according to the present invention will be described below with reference to the drawings.

Fig. 1 shows a functional configuration view of the computer system in this embodiment.

As shown in Fig. 1, the computer system in this embodiment is designed so that a plurality of client apparatuses 101, 102,... are connected to a schedule server apparatus 114 through a communication line 113.

The schedule server apparatus 114 is connected to databases 108 to 111 in which various kinds of information are stored.

The plurality of client apparatuses 101, 102, ... are allocated to a host person and subjects of participation with respect to a meeting. For example, in Fig. 1, the client apparatus 101 is allocated to a host 5 person of a meeting and the client apparatus 102 is allocated to a participant of the meeting.

Incidentally, the configuration of the client apparatus 101 is the same as that of the client apparatus 102 so that each client apparatus may be used for a host 10 person or for a subject of participation.

In this embodiment, the client apparatus 101 has an input controller 104 for permitting data inputting for performing schedule inputting of the host person or the subject of participation of the meeting and performing 15 idle-time retrieval, a display controller 105 for displaying an input schedule and outputting retrieval results for persons and equipments, and a communication controller 106 for transmitting and receiving data between the schedule server apparatus 114 and the client 20 apparatuses.

The schedule server apparatus 114 is connected to various databases 108 to 111 which will be described later, and has a database access unit 107 for making access to the various databases 108 to 111, a 25 multistageous idle-time retrieval unit 112 as a function for retrieving idle time for subjects of participation or equipments in a term designated by the host person, and a communication controller 115 for transmitting data to the

client apparatuses 101, 102,... and receiving data from the client apparatuses 101, 102,..., through the communication line 113. The above-mentioned databases include an equipment user account database 108, an equipment user schedule database 109 for storing schedules of the subjects of participation and the host person, an equipment manager account database 110 and an equipment schedule database 111 for storing schedules of equipments.

10 With respect to the multistageous idle-time retrieval means 112 in this embodiment, an overall processing procedure for retrieving idle time for subjects of participation will be described with reference to Fig. 2 and the processing procedure in Fig. 2 will be described on the basis of specific data with reference to Figs. 3 and 4.

 Incidentally, it is assumed now that schedules for subjects of participation are inputted one by one through the input controller 104.

20 First, the host person in an event such as a meeting, or the like, selects some groups of subjects of participation for the meeting and inputs other conditions (step 201 in Fig. 2, and step 301 in Fig. 3).

 Because retrieval is not completed yet at this point of time, a step 202 shifts the control to a step 203.

 In the step 301 in the specific example of Fig. 3, idle time from 9 o'clock to 19 o'clock is

searched as a condition. This is made to be a retrieval condition 3005.

Here, idle-time retrieval is made for Group-I 3001 (steps 204 and 302). In this embodiment, first, 5 comparison is made between A-schedule data 3003 and a retrieval condition (meeting-holding condition) 3005. From 9 o'clock to 13 o'clock the A-schedule data 3003 has idle time from 10 o'clock to 13 o'clock and from 14 o'clock to 19 o'clock. This result is used as a new 10 retrieval condition for B-schedule data 3004. A result 401, which shows that the idle time common to this new retrieval condition and the B-schedule data 3004 is from 10 o'clock to 12 o'clock, from 14 o'clock to 16 o'clock and from 17 o'clock to 19 o'clock, is obtained and stored 15 in a memory (not shown) in the schedule server apparatus 114.

Because control is further shifted to the step 202 but retrieval is not completed yet, the step 202 shifts control to the step 203.

20 In the step 203, the previous retrieval result 401 is used as a retrieval condition in the current retrieval.

25 Here, idle-time retrieval is made for Group-II 3002 in the same manner as in the Group-I 3001 (steps 204 and 402).

In a step 205, a retrieval result is obtained and stored in the memory of the schedule server apparatus 114.

Because control is further shifted to the step 202 and retrieval is completed at this point of time, the step 202 shifts control to a step 206.

Here, the retrieval result is displayed on the 5 display controller 105 of the client apparatus 101 through the communication controller 115 of the schedule server apparatus 114 and the communication controller 106 of the client apparatus 101, so that the content of the display shows a result 403 requested by the host person 10 (the step 206).

The above description is the gist of the multistageous idle-time retrieval method.

Next, the case where the retrieval method is divided more multistageously to widen the retrieval 15 condition will be described below.

Processing using specific data in this embodiment will be described with reference to Figs. 5 and 6.

When retrieval conditions are inputted, degrees of significance can be given to the respective 20 subjects of participation of the meeting to be held as to whether each subject of participation is essential or not. Significance may be classified into two values, good and bad, or may be classified into several values.

In this embodiment, three values "essential" 25 511, "optional" 512 and "selective" 513 are prepared as degrees of significance. Here, "essential" means an essential participant for the meeting, "optional" means an optional participant and "selective" means a specially

unnecessary participant.

In an input example 501 in Fig. 5, as the degrees of significance expressing whether essential or not for the meeting to be held, Group I is set to "essential" 511, Group II is set to "optional" 512 and Group 5 III is set to "selective" 513.

The input condition is directly used as the retrieval condition so that idle time common to the Group I and the input condition is retrieved by the 10 multistageous idle-time retrieval unit 112 (502).

After that, retrieval by the multistageous idle-time retrieval means 112 is performed group by group and the retrieval result is additionally and successively stored in the memory of the schedule server apparatus 114 15 without changing the idle time zone determined by the previous retrieval result.

For example, because a member belonging to the Group I is essential, idle time common to the Group I and the retrieval condition is necessarily stored in the 20 memory. On the other hand, the retrieval result for the Group II is as shown in 601. That is, while the idle time common to the Group I and the input condition remains in the memory, idle time common to the Group I and the Group II is additionally stored in the memory. The 25 same rule applies also to the Group III. Finally, a result in accordance with priority is outputted as the retrieval result 602.

A retrieval condition may be inputted so that

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at least one person representing each group is required to attend the meeting. A specific example of such a case will be described with reference to Figs. 7 and 8.

Incidentally, in this embodiment, it is assumed that a meeting room group 7000 is registered as a special group for schedules other than persons' schedules. The meeting room group includes equipments such as a meeting room, a tennis court, etc. In this embodiment, Equipment Y and Equipment Z are registered as the meeting room group.

First, it is assumed now that a retrieval condition 701 for idle time is inputted. An input condition is directly used as the retrieval condition so that idle time common to the Equipment Y and the input condition is retrieved (702).

The retrieval result is as shown in 703. Here, not only idle time common to the Equipment Y and the input condition is stored in the memory of the schedule server apparatus 114 but also the input condition expressing no member is stored in the memory.

The multistageous idle-time retrieval unit 112 is not used for the first group subjected to retrieval. For the second group et seq., retrieval is performed by the multistageous idle time retrieval unit 112. As retrieval stages, retrieval is performed for respective subjects of participation as shown in G 704, H 802 and I 804. Incidentally, also in this case, the retrieval result is added successively without changing the idle

time as the previous retrieval result. Though not shown, the idle time retrieval goes to retrieval of idle time common to the Equipment Z and the retrieval condition and retrieval of idle time common to G and the retrieval
5 condition when the retrieval up to J is completed.

Finally, if only the schedule including at least one element from each group is outputted as the retrieval result, the result may be that which is expected by the host person.

10 As described above, the idle time retrieval is divided multistageously so that the retrieval result can be narrowed to a result intended by the host person.

Further, degrees of significance are given to subjects of participation for the meeting so that a time
15 zone in which essential participants can attend the meeting can be retrieved. Accordingly, a burden on the host person can be also lightened.

Furthermore, idle time can be retrieved so that at least one participant or at least one equipment
20 such as a room satisfies the condition necessarily.

Alternatively, the schedule server apparatus 114 may be replaced by an exclusive-use server apparatus.

Alternatively, the person and equipment retrieval unit may be provided in the client apparatuses
25 101, 102, ..., not in the schedule server apparatus 114.

As is obvious from the above description, in the computer system according to the present invention, the multistageous idle-time retrieval unit is used so

that the retrieval result for the subjects of participation for the meeting or for the place where the meeting is to be held can be narrowed easily and speedily.

Accordingly, labor and time required for the host 5 person's determination of the term in which the meeting is to be held can be lightened extremely.

Further, degrees of significance are set to the subjects of participation respectively so that a time zone in which essential participants can attend the 10 meeting necessarily can be retrieved. Accordingly, a burden on the host person can be also lightened.

In addition, idle time can be retrieved so that at least one participant or at least one equipment such as a room satisfies the condition necessarily.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A schedule retrieval method for retrieving a schedule, comprising:

 a first step of accepting an initial or first conference-holding condition of said schedule;

 a second step of dividing a subject of said schedule into a plurality of groups;

 a third step of comparing one group in said plurality of groups obtained by division with said first conference-holding condition to make a coincident result be a new or second conference-holding condition;

 a fourth step of comparing one of said plurality of groups, which is not yet compared with any previous conference-holding conditions, with the one previous conference-holding condition to make a coincident result be a further new or newest conference-holding condition;

 a fifth step of performing said fourth step on all the remaining ones of said plurality of groups which are not yet compared with any previous conference-holding conditions; and

 a sixth step of outputting a retrieval result obtained by said fifth step.

2. A schedule server apparatus connected to terminal apparatuses allocated to schedule-reserving persons and schedule-reserved persons through a communication line for retrieving idle time of a schedule, comprising:

 a communication control means for transmitting

data to said terminal apparatuses and receiving data from said terminal apparatuses; and

a multistageous idle-time retrieval means having a function of dividing each of schedules registered for a plurality of persons and a plurality of equipments into a plurality of groups and retrieving common idle time from one of said plurality of groups to make an idle-time retrieval result be a retrieval condition for retrieving idle time from the schedule of another group.

3. A schedule server apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein degrees of significance are given to participants respectively so that schedules of said participants are grouped in the order of the degree of significance to thereby output idle time correspondingly to the degrees of significance.

4. A schedule server apparatus according to Claim 2, further comprising means for making registration for a special group, wherein idle time is retrieved so that at least one of participants and equipments in said special group satisfies a condition.

5. A recording medium capable of being read by a computer which retrieves idle time of a schedule comprising:

a first step of accepting an initial or first conference-holding condition of said schedule;

a second step of dividing a subject of said schedule into a plurality of groups;

a third step of comparing one group in said plurality of groups obtained by division with said first conference-holding condition to make a coincident result be a new or second conference-holding condition;

a fourth step of comparing one of said plurality of groups, which is not yet compared with any previous conference-holding conditions, with the one previous conference-holding condition to make a coincident result be a further new or newest conference-holding condition;

a fifth step of performing said fourth step on all the remaining ones of said plurality of groups which are not yet compared with any previous conference-holding conditions; and

a sixth step of outputting a retrieval result obtained by said fifth step.

CONFIDENTIAL

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method in which idle time retrieval is not lumped together but divided multistageously so that a burden on a host person for retrieving idle time for subjects of participation is lightened. The subjects of participation are divided into some groups so that idle time is retrieved group by group on the basis of a given retrieval condition. The retrieval is continued unless the retrieval is completed for all the groups.

FIG. 1

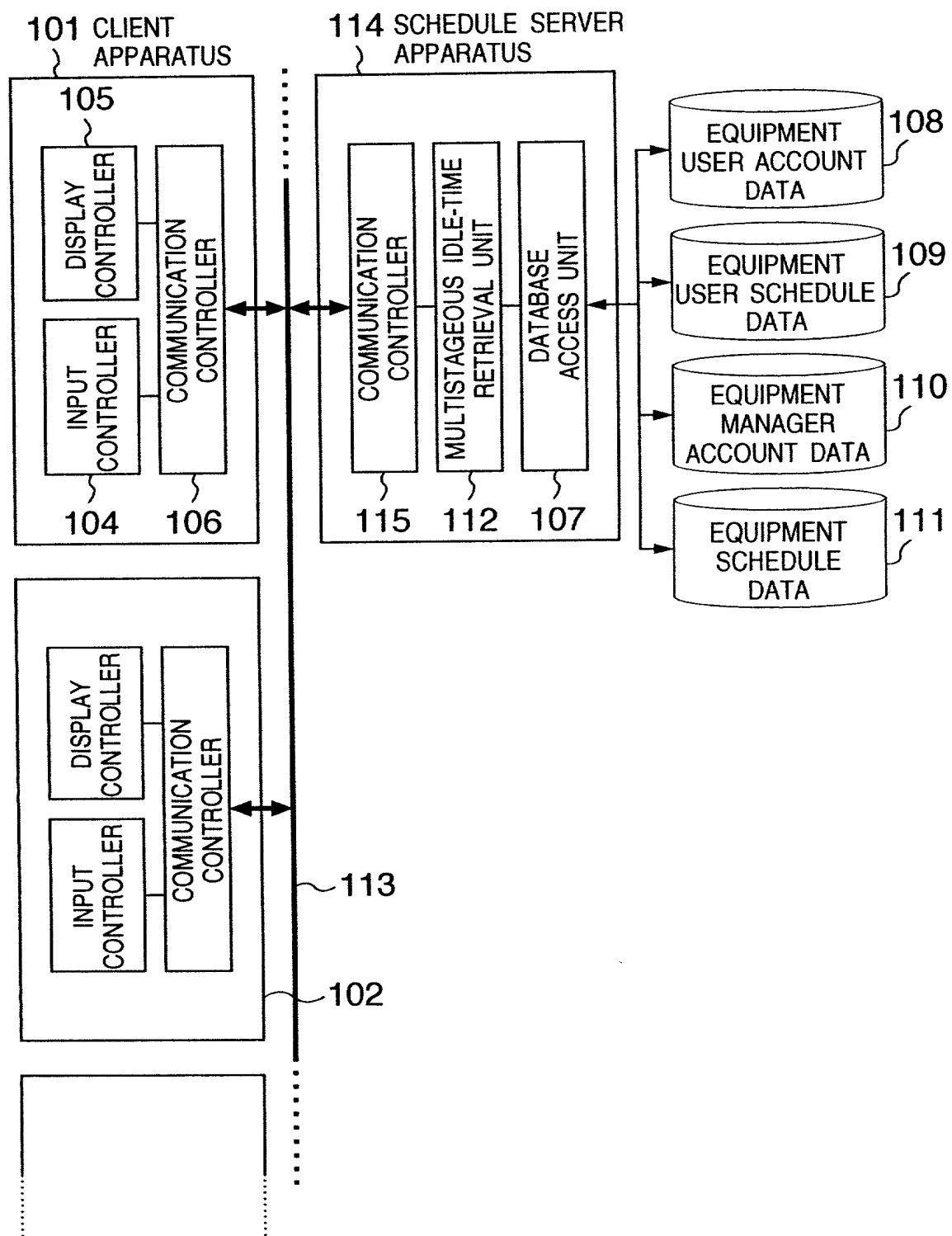


FIG. 2

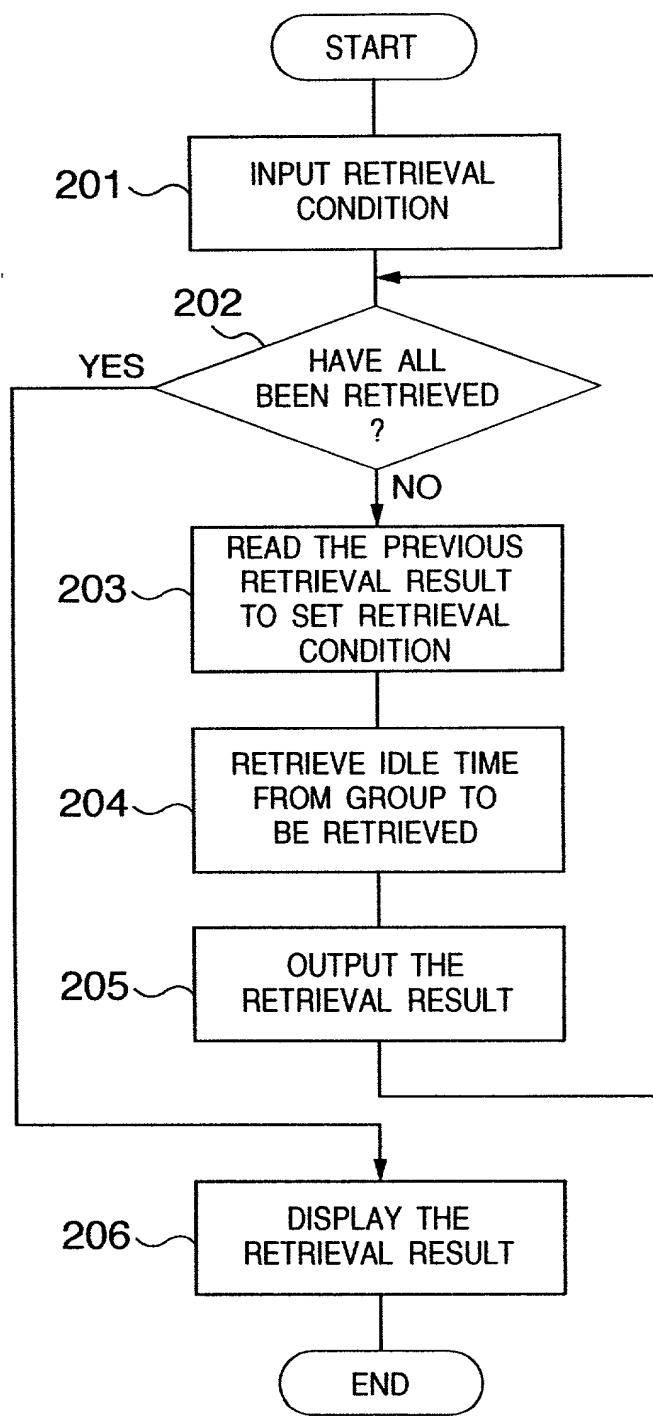


FIG. 3

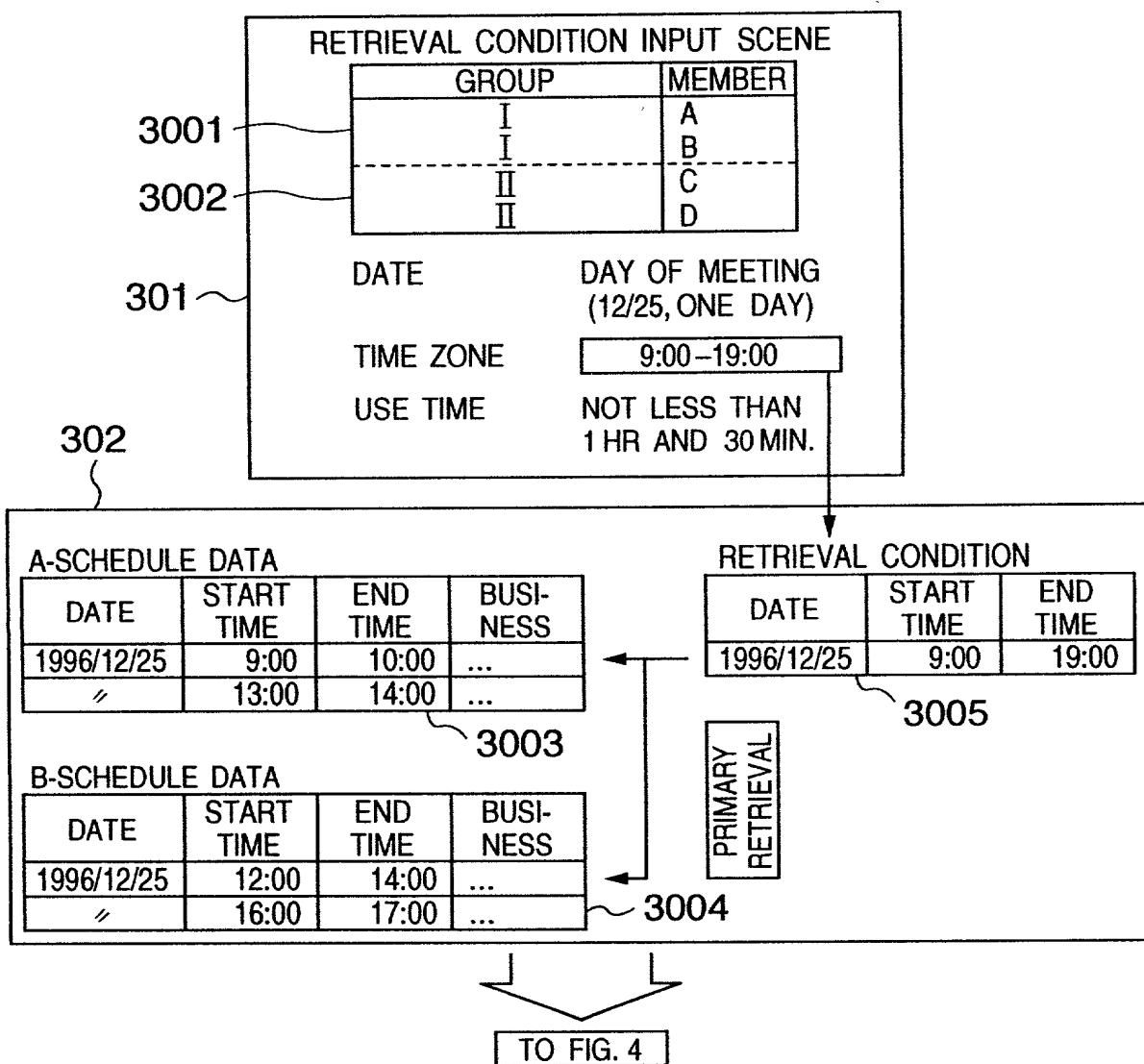


FIG. 4

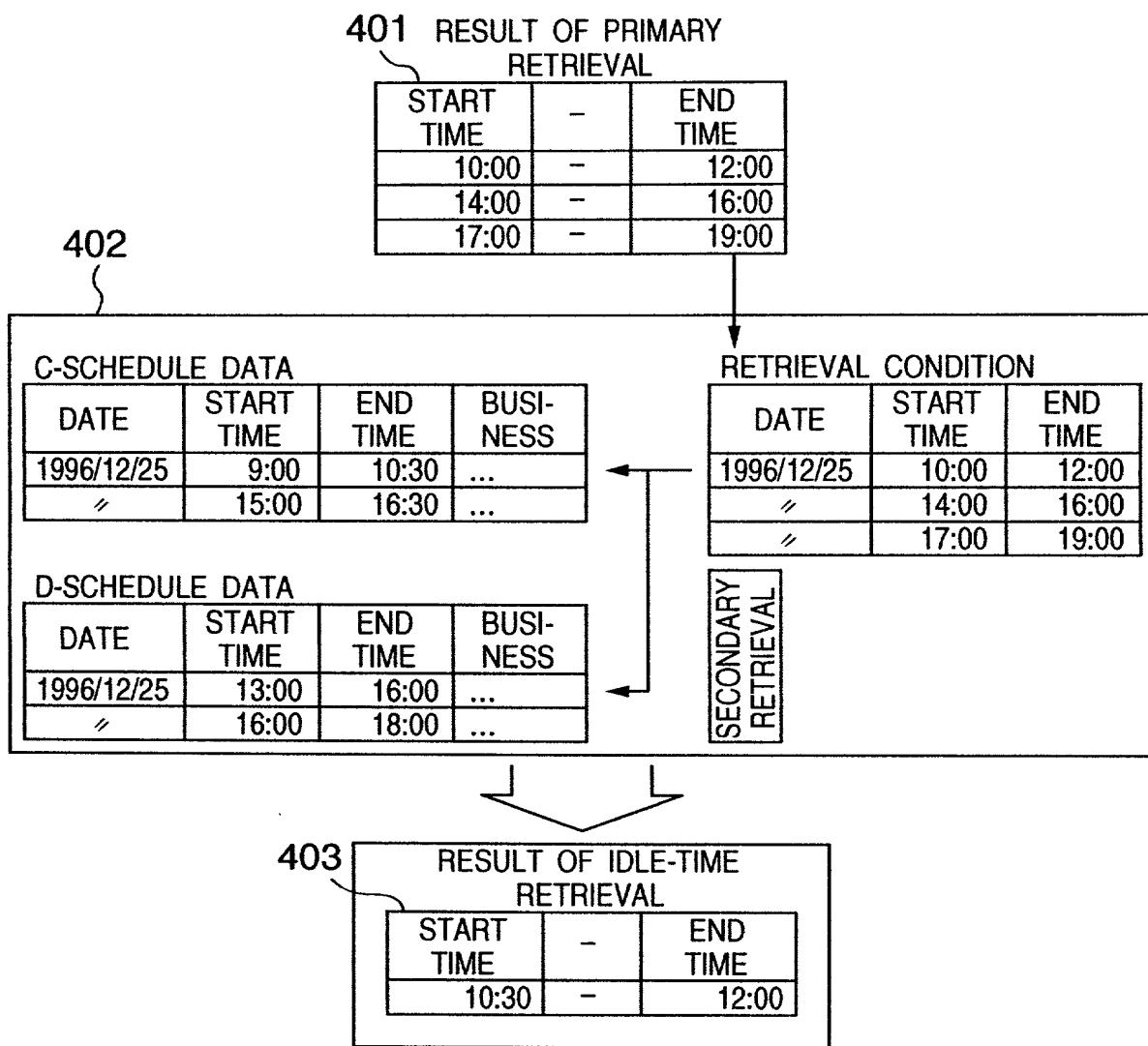


FIG. 5

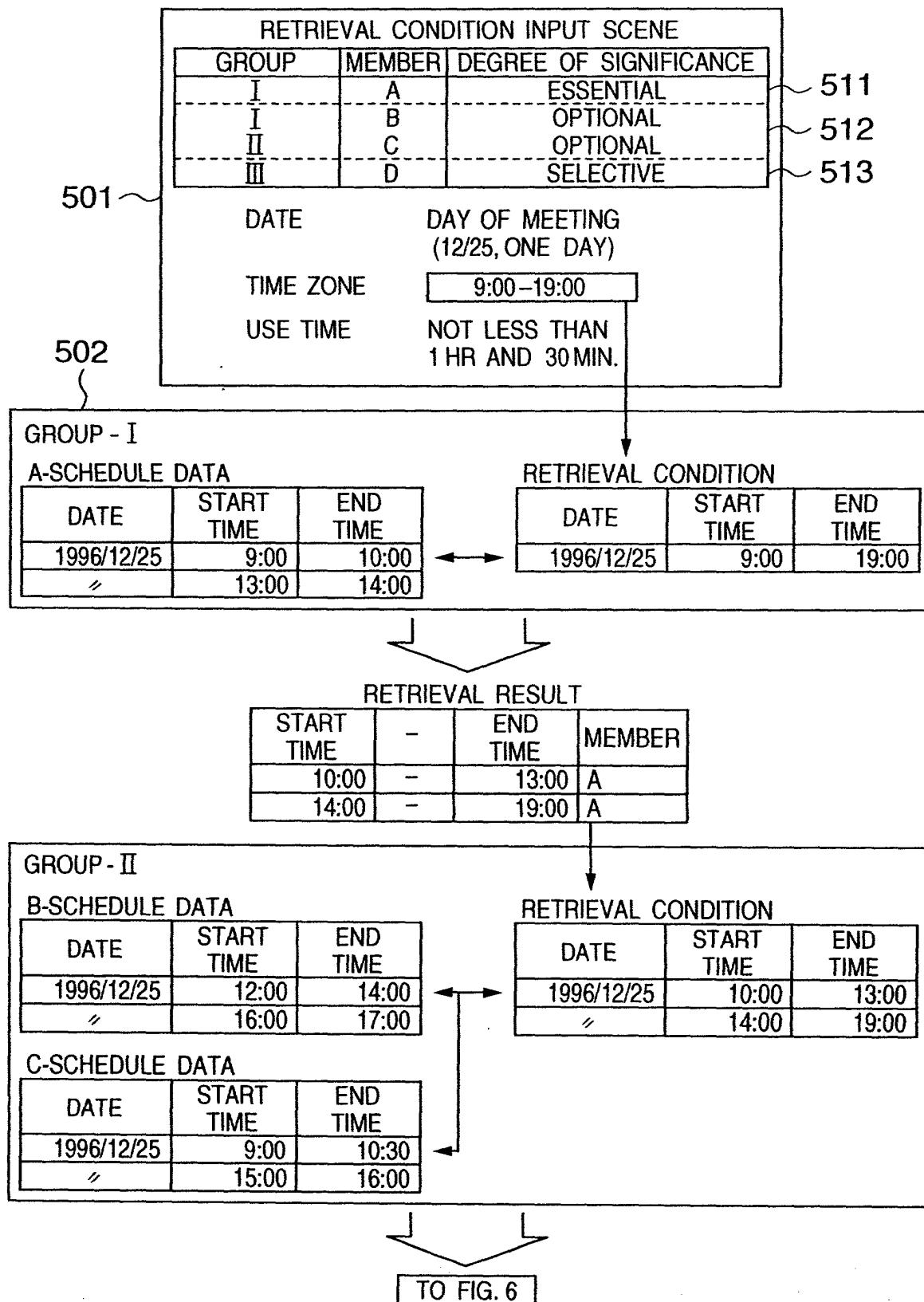


FIG. 6

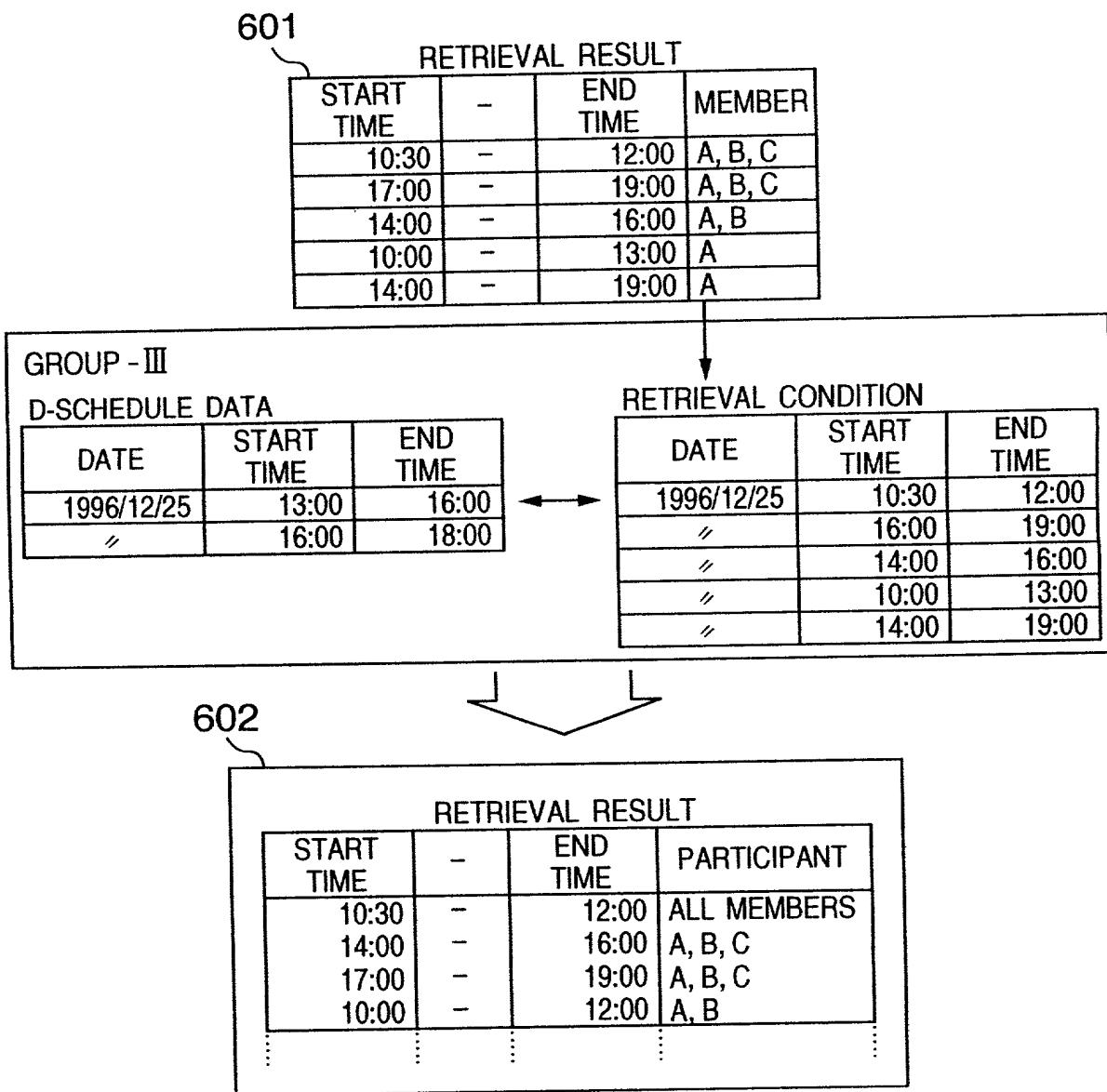


FIG. 7

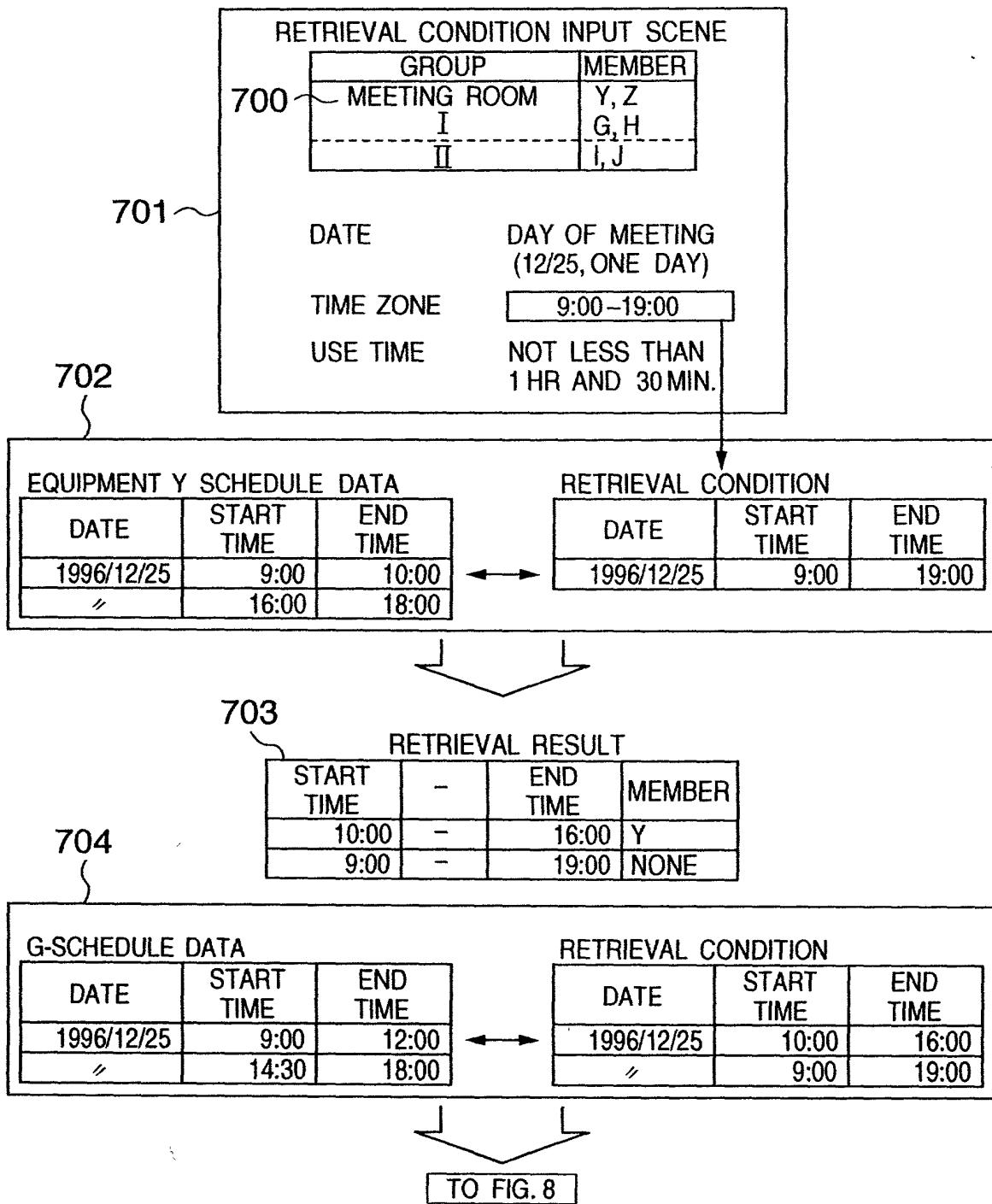
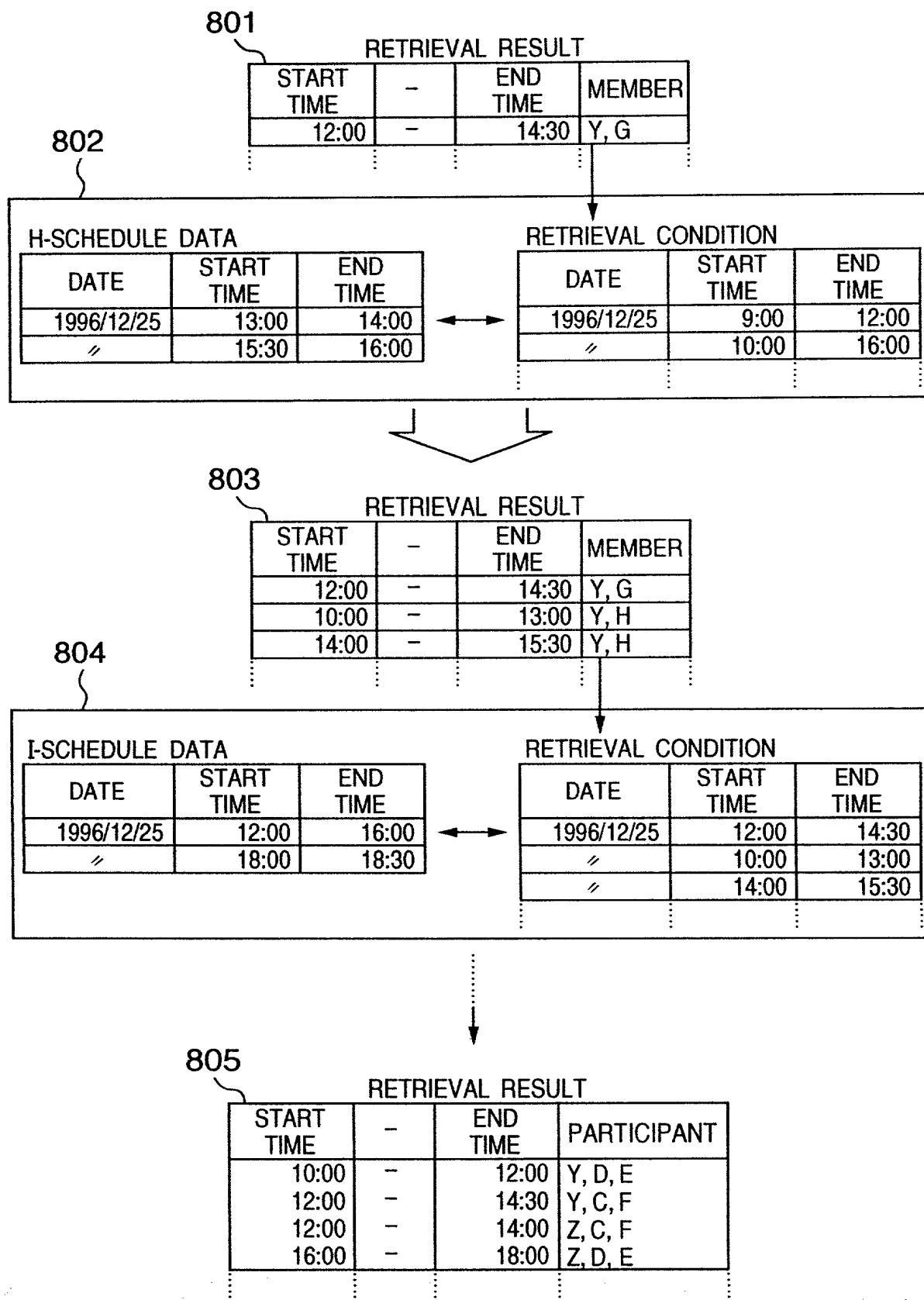


FIG. 8



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**CHANGE OF
CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS**
Application

Address to:
Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Application Number	Not Yet Assigned
Filing Date	August 23, 1999
First Named Inventor	Yoshinori NAKAYAMA
Group Art Unit	2764
Examiner Name	N. Nguyen
Attorney Docket Number	500.35669CX1

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Assignee of record of the entire interest.
Certificate under 37 CFR 3.73(b) is enclosed.



Attorney or agent of record .

Typed or Printed Name	Donald E. Stout, Registration No. 26,422
Signature	
Date	August 23, 1999

Burden Hour Statement: This form is estimated to take 0 : hours to complete. Time will vary depending upon the needs of the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you are required to complete this form should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, DC 20231. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC 20231.

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name, I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

"SCHEDULE RETRIEVAL METHOD FOR CONTROLLING SCHEDULES AND SCHEDULE SERVER APPARATUS WITH MULTISTAGEOUS IDLE-TIME RETRIEVAL MEANS"

the specification of which (check one) is attached hereto.
 was filed on _____
 as Application Serial No. _____
 and was amended on _____
 (if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)	Priority Claimed		
08-244472 (Number)	Japan (Country)	17 Sep., 1996 (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status: patented, pending, abandoned)
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status: patented, pending, abandoned)
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status: patented, pending, abandoned)
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status: patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby appoint as principal attorneys; Donald R. Antonelli, Reg. No. 20,296; David T. Terry, Reg. No. 20,178; Melvin Kraus, Reg. No. 22,466; Stanley A. Wal, Reg. No. 26,432; William I. Solomon, Reg. No. 28,565; Gregory E. Montone, Reg. No. 28,141; Ronald J. Shore, Reg. No. 28,577; Donald E. Stout, Reg. No. 26,422; Alan E. Schiavelli, Reg. No. 32,087; James N. Dresser, Reg. No. 22,973 and Carl I. Brundidge, Reg. No. 29,621 to prosecute and transact all business connected with this application and any related United States application and international applications. Please direct all communications to the following address:

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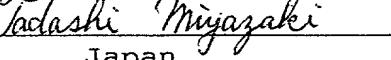
I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further, that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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